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SUBJECT: DISENGAGEMENT SITUATION REPORT, AUGUST 30, 2005

This is a joint message from Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem.

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

1. (SBU) The IDF continues to make steady progress in implementing the GOI disengagement. Hamas and Fatah personnel clashed near Rafah. Otherwise few notable security incidents took place in the last twenty-four hours. The GOI appears to have agreed to a phased handover of settlement areas in Gaza, thus easing PA security concerns. Egypt's Intelligence Chief has proposed a six-month interim solution to the Rafah crossing problem. End Summary.

2. (SBU) ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

-- IDF continues to concentrate on the removal of settlers' possessions, demolition of houses, and removal of IDF infrastructure.

-- Twelve reburials are scheduled to take place on August 30 as part of the transfer of the Gush Katif cemetery to Israel. Three soldiers killed in the Gaza are among those who will be reburied.

--Palestinian press reported August 30 that the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) will prepare a general census of all assets remaining in the Palestinian settlements.

3. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION

GAZA:

-- Hamas and Fatah Clash: Armed clashes between Hamas and Fatah personnel took place in Haya Salam area of Rafah at 0230 hours August 30, according to Palestinian sources. Fatah members tried to prevent Hamas from putting up posters. Two Fatah members were injured in the exchange of fire.

-- Weapons Tunnel: IDF uncovered a weapons smuggling tunnel along the Rafah borderline with Egypt and blew it up.

4. (SBU) PALESTINIAN REACTIONS

-- The Director General of the Palestinian Company for Economic Development (established by the Palestine Investment Fund to take over the settlement greenhouses) told the Palestinian press that his company would be ready to immediately start using the greenhouses post-disengagement. Crops from 1000 greenhouses would bring in around USD 70 million in revenue, he said.

5. (SBU) GOI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

-- Phased Handover Likely: The GOI has expressed interest in handing over each evacuated settlement on an individual basis to the PA, rather than in a single, one-day transfer, according to Israeli press reports. Concerns had been raised about the PA's ability to establish control over former settlement areas in the event of a rapid and uncoordinated IDF departure.

6. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

-- Crossing Proposal: Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman, currently visiting Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, has proposed that, after the IDF withdrawal from Gaza, the GOI should maintain control over the entry of people and goods into Gaza for an interim period of six months, according to Israeli press reports and post contacts. Under Suleiman's proposal, people and goods would be able to leave Gaza via Rafah with no Israeli supervision.

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